



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
New Orleans District

News Release

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Old dirt mine becomes Baton Rouge nature park *Blackwater Conservation Area dedication is Tuesday, March 26*

NEW ORLEANS – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, City of Baton Rouge/Parish of East Baton Rouge, and the Park and Recreation Commission for the Parish of East Baton Rouge (BREC) have transformed an abandoned dirt mine into a 62.5-acre nature park.

Dedication is set March 26 at 10:30 a.m. for the Blackwater Conservation Area on the Comite River. It is eight miles northeast of Baton Rouge, on Hooper Road between Blackwater Road and the river.

It's ready for bird watching, jogging or walking, and nature interpretation. The fish need a little time to grow. In several months to nearly a year, the recreational fishery should be developed. The Blackwater area will also be used as an educational resource on nature and the environment. And the public will have access to a sandbar on the river, the area's western boundary.

Construction began July 9 on the ecosystem restoration. A partnership of the Corps, City/Parish, and BREC turned the abandoned pit into a forested wetland complex with more than 15 acres of water features.

Advice and assistance was provided by four other agencies: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and Department of Environmental Quality.

Lakes of six and 2.5 acres were created and will be stocked with bluegill, largemouth bass and catfish. Restrooms and nearly 1.5 miles of walkways have been constructed for public use. Forested stands of bald cypress, river birch, sycamore, and water oaks cover half of the site. In the restoration areas, nearly 7,000 trees will be planted. Trees to be planted include bald cypress, tupelo gum, river birch, sycamore, sweet gum, common persimmon, pines and oaks. The conservation area will provide improved habitat for fish, waterfowl, wading birds, songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, and mammals. The habitat will continue to improve as the lakes and trees mature.

Water-quality improvement is expected, as the area is now a functioning wetland complex. This will improve water on the site and in the Comite River downstream. The area will also provide storage for Comite floodwaters, but will flood less frequently once the Corps completes the Comite River Diversion Canal, estimated in 2010.

The Blackwater Conservation Area will be operated and maintained by BREC (www.brec.org).

The area will be dedicated to the innocent people who were killed on September 11, 2001. For more information, see www.mvn.usace.army.mil/prj/cap/blackwater

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